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General Assembly
Sixtieth session

Official Records

13th plenary meeting
Monday, 19 September 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi

The President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nkurunziza (*spoke in French*): It is a distinct honour to address this Assembly on the occasion of the sixtieth regular session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, an important milestone in the life of our Organization. We would like to take this opportunity to express our warm congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the skill and dynamism he has displayed in leading our Organization. We would also like to pay tribute to his dedication to the cause of peace and to the interest he has always paid to the people of Burundi during their difficult times. Allow us also at this memorable time to express our profound gratitude to the Security Council of the United Nations for the resolute will it has displayed in accompanying the people of Burundi step by step in their search for peace.

Our country has just entered an essential phase in its history. In political terms, after more than ten years of war and a lengthy period of transition, the main protagonists in the conflict have agreed to bury the hatchet. Free, pluralist, fair and transparent elections were the culmination of this long process. Indeed, it was at the end of a genuine electoral marathon, involving local, legislative, senatorial and presidential elections, that the people of Burundi overwhelmingly chose the programme and candidates of my party, the CNDD-FDD (Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie, Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie), in calm and in dignity. This was an indisputable and undisputed victory recognized and acknowledged by all of the many foreign observers. The political parties have also accepted the verdict of the ballot boxes.

In order to enable every opportunity for national harmony and establish democracy once again, we have just set up a Government of broad national union consisting of all the elements of the Burundi people, with its political, social, ethnic and regional diversity, a Government where women hold the significant position they deserve.

We are especially pleased to note the genuine social and mental change represented by the entry of Burundian women into the political sphere. Today, women hold 35 per cent of posts in the executive branch. Their presence is notable in all State institutions. For the first time in my country's history,

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of the Republic is held by a woman. Women head seven of the 20 ministries, including in such important posts as justice, foreign relations and planning. Lastly, many women are working in provincial and communal administrations.

Our Government cherishes the hope that this contribution of women's talents to managing the affairs of State will help to strengthen democracy by giving it a warmer, more thoughtful and peaceful image.

We are also pleased that the democratic spirit of cohesion and unity in diversity which has breathed new life into the political scene is also being felt in the institutions of defence and security. Indeed, yesterday's antagonists — the former Burundian armed forces and the armed groups arrayed against them — have been merged into new forces, known as the National Defence Force and the National Police of Burundi, in which all the country's players are represented. That fact is rare enough to warrant highlighting.

All of those profound changes have been made possible by the synergy between the concern of the international community, the courage and maturity of the Burundian people, and the willingness to compromise of the political class. We express our warmest thanks to all the international partners that accompanied us on our long road to peace. In particular, we would single out the regional initiative, the United Nations Operation in Burundi, mediators Mwalimu Julius Nyerere and President Mandela, facilitator Jacob Zuma, the European Union, the United States of America, the African Union and many friendly countries, especially those that contributed troops to the peacekeeping force as well as financial logistic means.

Peace in our country, like the lasting success of our democratic experience, is closely linked to the stability of the regional environment. We therefore welcome the efforts to restore peace, stability and sustainable development in the Great Lakes region. We are closely following and actively participating in the preparations for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, now being organized under United Nations and African Union auspices, with the support of the region's Group of Friends.

We are one with our world village. Nothing that occurs there does not touch us. Threats to peace and security sneer at borders. We call today for an urgent partnership to combat terrorism. In that context, the general convention on international terrorism, once concluded, will be an innovative legal instrument in addressing issues that have yet to be regulated.

We also need to stem the phenomenon of drug trafficking, which — with its many corollaries, including child labour, the sex industry and illegal migration — is transforming human beings into twenty-first century commodities.

Combating terrorism must include promoting a culture of peace. It would thus be useful to use the International Decade for the Culture of Peace to build the defences of peace in the minds of men and women, particularly through education, the media, faith-based organizations and cultural programmes aimed at children.

Terrorism is also a denial of human rights. We therefore welcome the decision to create the human rights council to promote respect for those rights. The council will allow us to end the partisan bickering prevalent in the Commission on Human Rights.

As to the reform of the Security Council and other United Nations organs, our Government supports the position of the African Union.

With respect to good governance, our Government is committed to taking appropriate measures to establish good governance in all its aspects. We refer in particular to capacity-building, the mobilization of domestic resources and the implementation of strategies to combat corruption, fraud and embezzlement. We will soon be unveiling a new law and anti-corruption squad.

We are committed to fighting impunity, for we want to strive for impartial justice, not only by building our capacities in that sphere, but also by reforming the sectors involved in that issue. In that context, we request in particular the international community's assistance in the urgent establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission.

In the socio-economic field, we hope that the establishment of new elected, democratic institutions will lay the groundwork for robust legitimacy and effectiveness in our reconstruction and socio-economic development strategies. We wish to prioritize the rehabilitation of social and economic infrastructure destroyed during the war and the reintegration of expatriates, internally displaced persons, demobilized soldiers and war victims.

We also intend to attach high priority to education. Thus, when we came to power, we decided to provide free primary schooling to all children by the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year. That priority goal for education requires the development and implementation of ambitious and urgent programmes to train qualified teachers, rebuild schools and obtain new educational materials.

For the period 2006-2008, we are planning for the construction of at least one primary school for each census area, totalling some 350 primary schools. That will involve the construction of 800 classrooms in 2006, the recruitment of 2,000 new teachers and the acquisition of teaching materials at an estimated cost of $15 million. In that same context, we will prioritize professional training, particularly in the agricultural, paramedical, technical and trade fields, in order to hasten the country's reconstruction. By 2008, we expect to build in each province a technical secondary school with several departments and a capacity of at least 1,000 pupils.

Increased financial resources will be necessary and we know that we can count on the assistance of the international community. In that regard, we support the innovative proposal of the French Government to find new sources of development financing by imposing a levy on air tickets.

Much remains to be done in the area of health. Our Government has undertaken to develop a policy to make significant improvements in universal access to health care, and to implement the national strategic plan to combat HIV/AIDS, an essential component of which is capacity-building in HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment.

The achievements of my country, particularly in the political and security fields, are important steps in the right direction. Nevertheless, they are only the start of a process that must be consolidated.

In particular, we will have to resume activities to combat poverty and re-establish economic growth, two essential measures that will allow our people to reap the dividends of peace.

The support of the entire population for the peace process and the programme for economic growth is essential. But how can the people feel that the new policy includes them if their living conditions are not rapidly improved? That is why the support of the international community in this difficult period is of supreme importance. We make an urgent appeal to the international community to ensure that the level and quality of their commitments will respond to the insistent expectations of our population and to the new democratic changes.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Burundi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Madagascar, His Excellency Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ravalomanana (*spoke in French*): No one here took part in the first General Assembly in 1945. We can only imagine how at the end of the Second World War men and women full of hope were prompted by a firm resolve to change and make the world better. They were right. The shortcomings and weaknesses of our Organization should not in any way detract from the leading role of the United Nations in the world.

Do we today share the same spirit that inspired our predecessors? At the end of this General Assembly will we feel that we have improved the world?

We welcome the draft outcome document. We also welcome recent resolutions adopted by the Security Council on counter-terrorism and conflict prevention, particularly in Africa. We support the early establishment of a human rights council so as to promote democracy.

However, the results of the summit meeting do not fully correspond with Africa's aspirations. What is lacking is that long-hoped-for impetus that would enable every Member State to express its views, give hope to our peoples, preserve the balance of nature and enable us to ensure the futures of all the world's children. We need to further strengthen our efforts by trying fresh approaches.

First of all, it is high time to strengthen the role of the General Assembly. It is also time for Africa to be better represented within United Nations bodies, and in particular on the Security Council. That is a matter of justice, but it is also a necessity for the development of our continent. Having Africa's voice heard on the international level and allowing it to share in responsibilities on a global level are marks of concern and respect for our States and our peoples. Let us put an end to the exclusion of the African continent. We want to make our full and complete contribution to debates and decision-making on issues that concern how our world works.

The discussions in recent months have focused on institutional reform at the United Nations. That is a very important question. It is also important for Africa. But we would ask you to expand the discussion so as to properly define the role that the Organization should play in world development. The United Nations should be more than just a crisis management body — a body that addresses poverty, disasters and emergencies. Let us convert it into a body that inspires us with hope. Let us work together for development, justice and equity.

The sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations should mark the beginning of a new era in which we will have the opportunity to build a more prosperous, more just, more democratic and more environmentally aware world — a world that is sounder, healthier, more responsible and more united.

We need to work out strategies and plans that arouse enthusiasm among nations and attract the fervent hopes of our peoples. We will only change the world if we can secure the support of our populations.

The United Nations must devise and adopt the necessary measures to establish a more balanced world. All the crises, the wars, the questions of security and terrorism, the world's epidemics — all of those have concrete causes.

The Secretary-General rightly quoted one of the United Nations purposes from the preamble to the Charter: "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". Our peoples want to have real opportunities. Quite rightly, they call for the favourable conditions that will allow them to take advantage of those opportunities.

Our Organization is 60 years old. Much has been achieved in decolonization and peacekeeping, for instance. Five years ago we defined the Millennium Development Goals. Now we must go still further. Let us devise a genuine global strategy for development, a strategic partnership with a clear-cut vision and more ambitious goals.

As regards Africa, what is lacking is a clear vision of its future. It can be seen that Africa is still a poor continent. Nonetheless, Africa has the potential to be rich. The previous General Assembly provided me with an opportunity to propose a "Marshall Plan for Africa". The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom made the same proposal and the President of the World Bank, Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, has also spoken of a plan of action for Africa. Let us ask other donors to join in this initiative.

The Marshall Plan for Africa should cover much more than a call to cancel debt and increase financial support. It should take into account Africa's potential and the right steps that are needed to realize it. It should build a positive image of our continent and determine the role that it could play in economic, political, social and cultural spheres.

Globalization highlights the economic dimension of international relations. However, we need to invest more in the social dimension of development by enhancing the role of the Economic and Social Council so as to meet the legitimate aspirations of our peoples.

The future of Africa lies, of course, with its children. The plan for Africa should describe how we can approve the transfer of knowledge and how we can ensure access for young Africans to the world's knowledge and expertise, so that the intellectual potential of millions of people will not be wasted.

We need to increase literacy levels. We also need an educational system that meets international standards of quality and effectiveness — a system that will foster creativity and help our peoples to realize their dreams, a system that will optimize our countries'

human resources so as to enable us to play an important role in the world economy; a system which will help to close the digital divide among nations.

Saving African children also means feeding them. In that respect, overcoming hunger in Africa is an urgent challenge, as millions of people will be affected by this crisis.

Madagascar, as a new member of the Southern African Development Community, urges the General Assembly to make that crisis its highest priority. We must act rapidly and with resolve.

Let us also improve the situation of women. They deserve to play a more significant role in civil society and in the economic and political arena.

I have personally been asked by the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) project to share their concerns with you. Indeed, one of the most burdensome daily chores of African women is providing a family with water. Access to drinking water for all frees women from servitude and thus preserves their dignity. Moreover, the issue of water management is inseparable from those of sanitation and hygiene. Water is a source of life and a great economic asset. The development of hydroelectric energy is one solution to Africa's energy deficit. Let us not forget that rational water management will enable us to achieve food self-sufficiency.

Such a Marshall Plan should include the protection and development of natural resources, which are crucial to our continent. To that end, we have a vision, which we call "Madagascar, naturally".

Two years ago in Durban, I announced our decision to triple the extent of protected areas in the country so as to ensure the preservation of our rich and unique biodiversity. We took the decision to earmark 8 per cent of funds stemming from the cancellation of external debt for the funding of our protected-area system.

The African continent already is involved in the preservation of natural resources for the world and will increase its efforts in that area.

Let us focus on agribusiness by creating more opportunities for processing our natural products and thus enhancing the value-added that they bring to our countries. This is the approach that Madagascar is taking now, with the support of donors. Let us foster initiatives to establish a fair and equitable trading regime among nations, such as the reduction of trade barriers.

In short, such a Marshall Plan should make it clear that the African continent can prosper by shouldering its responsibilities. We need to speak more of our assets than of our weaknesses. We need to speak of our potential rather than our lack of resources. The world wants to invest in our potential. Let us find a fresh approach. Let us create a new image, a new, clear vision for Africa. It is only through such a vision, along with a genuine global strategy for development, that the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved.

Such an approach must incorporate the various international and bilateral programmes and projects whose differing structures, objectives and content make them complicated to manage and hinder the identification of possible synergies. But it is incumbent on us to ensure the effective coordination of development and thus adopt the concept of country ownership. We in Madagascar have taken the initiative of setting up national programmes in which all donors' projects are incorporated.

The world must heed the needs of Africa, but Africa must also face up to its responsibilities by strengthening democracy, good governance and the rule of law.

The discussions on the role and the structure of the United Nations which have taken place in the context of the sixtieth anniversary offer us an exceptional opportunity. Let us create more equitable structures that are better suited to today's needs and realities. Let us draw inspiration from the spirit of the founding fathers of our Organization.

Let us be nations united in spirit, with a global vision and strategy of development for a world that is not only more dynamic but also more balanced, more equitable and more responsible. Let us work towards that end.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Emile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

Mr. Emile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lahoud: Mr. President, first of all, I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of this session of the General Assembly and to thank your predecessor, Mr. Ping, for all his efforts during his tenure. I would like also to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for all his endeavours in seeking the preservation of this great institution's integrity as well as world peace.

This year's session of the General Assembly comes days after a landmark meeting of world leaders at which they adopted a blueprint that aims to increase the efficiency of the United Nations in the prosecution of human rights abuses and in the preservation of world peace and security. Moreover, that instrument calls on all to move forward with a much-needed, comprehensive programme of reforms at the United Nations, including in the Security Council.

This clearly demonstrates our faith in the primacy of the role of the United Nations in the preservation of world peace, as the embodiment of our collective desire and will, and as the legitimate body for crisis resolution within the framework of every individual State's sovereignty.

Truly, the only way out of this dangerous impasse is a return to a multipolar world order, based on the rule of international law and justice and on respect for every nation's sovereignty. Moreover, such a wise approach should be complemented by serious and concerted efforts to fight poverty and oppression and, consequently, the root causes of terror.

The core values of a democratic and just world are best served by enhancing the capabilities of the United Nations and its instruments, and by reinforcing in-house democratic values. This institution should remain the primary defender of such human values as freedom, justice and peace.

The advances in telecommunications and information technologies, signature traits of globalization, have led to a withering of geographical boundaries, along with a strengthening of multinational corporations, and hence the need for a new approach to tackling our world's problems in international relations. The "crumbs" from the rich nations have become insufficient to satisfy the needs of a third world seeking to extract itself from backwardness and to eradicate poverty and disease. Those ailments have spread beyond the boundaries of the great development divide and serve as a stern wake-up call and a ticking bomb for us all to heed.

That is why it is imperative to call for a serious and urgent dialogue between North and South, for rapid and eased transfer of technological advances and capital, and for bolstering the development of those nations that seek modernity. Moreover, it is crucial to encourage interaction and cooperation between developing States through such forums as the summit that was held in Brasilia last May, where Arab nations met the nations of South America. Lebanon looks forward to the follow-up meetings of the Brasilia summit, considering the importance of cooperation between those two important geographic blocs.

At this juncture, it is logical to ask whether extremism, terrorism and wanton violence against innocent civilians are the by-products of the environment of seclusion and deprivation. In view of the rapid spread of terrorism, we feel that the approach to countering the plague of terrorism remains superficial and unable to tackle the root causes of the plague.

Having suffered the awful consequences of that plague, Lebanon was always a bellwether in condemning all terrorist acts around the world. That is because few nations have so endured and continue to endure the consequences of that evil. That is why we know that an effective anti-terror campaign requires an environment of constructive cooperation worldwide, remote from politically motivated campaigns of vilification, and as a platform for a clear definition of terrorism, remote from the wilful or unintended conflation of the inalienable right of people to fight occupation and acts of wanton terror.

Therefore, and in order to conclusively win the war on terror, the security approach should be complemented by mid- and long-term approaches aimed at resolving political crises in order to deprive the terrorists of all legitimacy. That is why tackling the problems of oppression and occupation, along with bolstering development, education and the attainment of a better life, will surely lead to shrinking the human pool that feeds extremism.

For decades now, the Middle East has witnessed conflicts and unresolved disputes and, as a consequence, has been subject to the festering wounds of terrorism. Needless to say, the core of the problem remains the fact that Arab lands are still under occupation in spite of the many resolutions of international legitimacy, many adopted in this very edifice, calling for an end to occupation.

The immediate implementation of those resolutions, as well as General Assembly resolution 194 (III) — which affirms the right of return of the Palestinian refugees to their lands confiscated by Israel and bars the resettlement of the uprooted Palestinians in their host countries — remains the only way to defuse and to dry up the wells of extremism. That will pave the way to a comprehensive, just and peaceful settlement in our region, as foreseen in the 1991 Madrid peace summit and the implementation of the land-for-peace principle.

Those principles of peace were confirmed as a strategic choice by all Arab leaders during the Beirut Arab summit of 2002. Sadly, the initiative has yet to be seized upon to resolve regional conflicts and to achieve a final and peaceful settlement in the Middle East.

Awaiting the historic resolution of the conflict, Lebanon commends the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for all that it does, and calls upon the international community to bolster its capabilities in order to alleviate the hardships of the Palestinian refugees in their places of "temporary" residence.

The daily Israeli violations of Lebanon's territorial integrity and aggressions against the people of South Lebanon have made that important part of my country yet another point of tension in the Middle East. Israel's violation of the Blue Line and its continuing occupation of parts of my country, along with the imprisonment of scores of our citizens without any recourse to due process, are in clear violation of international law, to say nothing of the lethal hardships faced by our citizens in the freed areas of South Lebanon due to the thousands of land mines planted by Israel during its two-decade occupation of South Lebanon.

My country continues to adhere to a comprehensive and just peace settlement, to the principle of non-aggression, and to respect for human rights, and yearns for the implementation of all international resolutions towards those ends. In the meantime, we cannot but value the role played by the United Nations in South Lebanon through the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) — a role that has been extended to and benefited Lebanon for almost three decades. Our clinging to the UNIFIL presence emanates from our commitment to peace and security, pending a final resolution of the conflicts in the region.

Here, I would like to avail myself of the opportunity to salute the UNIFIL forces active in South Lebanon, to thank them for their sacrifices, and to bow in memory of the fallen peacekeepers.

Lebanon has long endured Israel's wars and occupation, despite a Security Council resolution calling for the immediate cessation of the occupation. Alas, Israel ignored that resolution for over two decades. That gave birth to a staunchly national movement of resistance and defence of Lebanon's territorial integrity, as guaranteed by the Charter of the United Nations under the right to fight occupation.

Despite the persistence of all the aforementioned conditions of occupation, violations and aggressions, and due to Lebanon's adherence to all resolutions of international legitimacy — an adherence based on a clear understanding of the world community's demands — the Government of Lebanon launched an internal dialogue between all Lebanese groups in order to maintain our unity, security and stability, and to reinforce our internal and international positions. We look forward to maintaining that rapport with the world community in order to achieve those noble goals.

Since the historic reconciliation at Taef, Lebanon has enjoyed over a decade of stability and tranquillity, quickly recapturing its regional pre-eminence and its pioneering role as a land of religious tolerance — an example to follow in the dialogue of civilizations. Moreover, Lebanon has enjoyed an unprecedented level of economic revitalization and has been able to

forge iron-clad unity in its armed forces and civil institutions.

However, Lebanon has recently gone through some horrific and fateful events, one of which — the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri — constitutes the hardest blow in its modern history. That assassination caused great grief for our nation, and the repercussions were felt throughout the world. We look forward to the timely and prompt disclosure of the International Inquiry Commission's results of the investigation into that heinous act, and we thank the Security Council for consenting to Lebanon's request to appoint such a Commission.

Moreover, Lebanon appreciates the great efforts undertaken by the Inquiry Commission in its search for the truth, and will afford the Commission all the support that it needs in order for us to prosecute the culprits to the full extent of the law. That underlines the commitment of Lebanon and of the world community in the fight against terrorism.

Despite the abominable assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and the ensuing national malaise, we were able to conduct exemplary parliamentary elections, which have been heralded by most observers as yet another landmark in the democratic history of Lebanon.

United Nations and international monitoring officials testified that those elections were held in accordance with the highest standards. Consequently, a Government of national unity has been formed, which has taken upon itself the task of immediately tackling Lebanon's internal and external affairs, within the framework of a serious dialogue aimed at achieving a national consensus and the preservation of what we all desire, namely, Lebanon's stability and national unity.

The new Lebanese Government is determined to undertake a comprehensive plan of reform that will encompass all political, administrative and economic aspects, and as a first step it has established a much-needed consultative national body to formulate a new electoral law that will live up to the recommendations of the European Union's delegated commission.

Moreover, the Lebanese Government looks forward to the valuable support of the United Nations, and conveys the gratitude of the people of Lebanon. Finally, we commend the precise follow-up provided by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for the rebuilding of a solid national economy.

From this rostrum, we set forth Lebanon's struggle for freedom, justice and the rule of law. It has been Lebanon's fate to walk this path in a region of festering, decades-long conflicts and disputes. As such, it has ended up paying an exorbitant price in wars, occupations and assassinations. But Lebanon has been relentless in its devotion to what is good and right, and has always been able to defeat the forces of sedition and destruction.

Today, we owe our moment of triumph to our perseverance and to the international community's commitment to Lebanon. We ask that you take our hand, once again, as we cross the threshold from fear and war to hope and peace.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emile Lahoud, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Item 9 of the provisional agenda (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius.

The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Ramgoolam (Mauritius): I should like, on behalf of my delegation and of the Government and the people of the Republic of Mauritius, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. We are confident that

you will be able to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to you. I want to assure you, as I did during our meeting this morning, of my delegation's fullest cooperation during your tenure of office.

I would also like to convey my delegation's gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon for the outstanding manner in which he conducted the affairs of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. As Africans, we are proud of his exemplary stewardship.

My delegation also wishes to express its appreciation for the tireless and dedicated efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in leading the Organization in these challenging times.

The very first words of the United Nations Charter — "We the peoples of the United Nations" — are of overwhelming significance. They imply that people should be the primary beneficiaries of every resolution that we adopt and every programme that we launch. As we engage in this debate, we should ask ourselves whether we have, indeed, put the peoples at the centre of all of our deliberations and activities. Have we done enough to ensure that ordinary people, men and women, young and old, benefit from all our initiatives and actions, collective as well as individual?

Last Friday, by adopting the outcome document, leaders of the world renewed their pledge to save humanity from the scourge of war, fear, disease, famine and poverty. The citizens of the world were witness to the sober promises we made in it. They now wait, in earnest, to see concrete results. We are therefore required to muster the collective political will to mobilize the necessary resources to fulfil those pledges.

The wealthy and powerful North should assist the less fortunate countries, which require assistance to help propel them into the orbit of irreversible sustainable social and economic growth. For its part, the South must devote energy and show creativity as it engages in a common effort to attain social development and human security.

The spirit of teamwork and partnership which resulted in the successful outcome of the United Nations world summit should allow us to adopt a fresh mindset that places the interests, security and welfare of our peoples at the centre of our socio-economic policies. That cannot be done without promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In our efforts to pursue people-centred development, we must put a premium on tackling those national and transnational issues that have a direct impact on people's welfare. Lifting peoples out of abject poverty and endowing them with appropriate means to lead productive lives is the best guarantee for long-term sustained social stability, which, in turn, will ensure prosperity and international peace. Poverty reduction and eradication must therefore remain at the core of all development efforts towards a just and equitable order.

In keeping with our democratic tradition, just three months ago, the people of my country voted, overwhelmingly, for a change of Government. Immediately upon assuming office, my Government has formulated development strategies based on the premise that economic and social policies must subserve the primacy of the people, in particular the poor. In fact, the fundamental principle of my Government's policy is putting the people first. My Government believes that the fullest possible participation of the people in the development process is the best guarantee for the success of any growth strategy.

The first set of social decisions taken by my Government, with that in mind, has been to expand the welfare State to cover free transportation for students and the elderly as well as to restore old-age pensions for all citizens. My Government's overriding objective is ultimately to make the economy work for the people, not to make the people work for the economy.

My delegation believes that assisting developing countries through increased official development assistance (ODA) is crucial; but it is only a palliative, not a remedy. Aid without trade would be not only unsustainable but, indeed, self-defeating. Trade is, and will always remain, the recognized engine of economic growth and development. Developing countries continue to face impediments in their efforts to attain sustained economic growth. Tariff and non-tariff barriers in developed countries, combined with the non-implementation of commitments undertaken with respect to development financing and debt alleviation for developing countries, further aggravate the situation. We call on the international community to demonstrate the political will necessary to ensure that

the Doha development round truly takes into account those concerns so as to achieve a fair and equitable global trading system for the benefits of our people.

My delegation welcomes the particular attention given by the world summit to the special needs of Africa. While many countries throughout the world have made significant progress in lifting their people out of poverty, for many others — mainly in sub-Saharan Africa — poverty, hunger, illiteracy, infectious diseases and the incidence of HIV/AIDS, unemployment and environmental degradation continue to take a heavy toll. My delegation therefore appreciates the resolve of the international community to address those issues and emphasizes the need for timely implementation of the relevant measures.

Despite significant efforts that have resulted in peace in several parts of Africa, the continent continues to suffer from violent conflicts and humanitarian crises. The plight of displaced people — especially women and children — in those conflict situations and in refugee camps needs to be urgently addressed. My delegation wishes to underscore the importance of enhanced measures to protect vulnerable groups, especially women and children, during and after armed conflicts.

In our own region, Mauritius continues to remain actively engaged in the reconciliation process in the Comoros. We are presently coordinating the preparations to host a donor round table for the Comoros later this year. The importance of the meeting cannot be overstated. We urge the donor community to contribute to this process for the benefit of the people of the Comoros.

The situation in the Middle East is seeing some tangible progress. We welcome the process of Israeli disengagement from Gaza and the northern West Bank, and we commend the efforts of the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict. We urge both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples to continue the much-needed confidence-building measures so as to achieve a just and lasting peace.

With regard to Iraq, where innocent civilians are falling victim to violence on a daily basis, it is imperative that necessary support be provided to ensure the creation of an environment in which the Iraqi people can live in peace and security.

I spoke extensively on terrorism in the statement I made on 15 September 2005 during the High-level Plenary Meeting. I wish to reaffirm my country's commitment to fully cooperate with the international community to fight the scourge of terrorism, which has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of ordinary and innocent people.

At a time when there is a global consensus regarding the need to build a more secure world, it is a matter of the greatest regret that the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons failed to achieve a conclusive outcome. The proliferation of nuclear weapons poses a grave risk of fissile material falling into the wrong hands. That eventuality is too horrendous to contemplate. The devastation that could be caused by so-called low-yield nuclear weapons is unimaginable.

Mauritius advocates the eventual complete elimination of all nuclear weapons on the basis of a comprehensive and non-discriminatory disarmament regime. To demonstrate once again its full commitment to non-proliferation and to international peace and security, Mauritius recently signed the Additional Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mauritius welcomes the agreement reached in June 2005 in New York on a politically binding international instrument on the tracing of small arms and light weapons, which will no doubt assist in combating the illicit trade in such weapons. That represents a significant step in ensuring that our peoples live in a safer world.

As regards reform of the Security Council, I wish to refer to my statement on 15 September 2005 outlining the position of Mauritius on that issue. We have a unique opportunity for substantial reform; it must not be squandered. It is imperative that Africa and India, the world's largest democracies, should find their rightful place in such reform. A reformed Security Council should reflect the present geopolitical realities to meet the aspirations of all our peoples.

The United Nations is a vital forum in which States, large and small, wealthy and less fortunate, can have their voices heard. It also provides a framework for collective action on the basis of consensus partnership and mutual understanding. I wish to reiterate the appeal I made, as Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, to our friends and partners at the

special session on financing for development to continue to assist the small island developing States in their sustainable development efforts through the proper and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

Regional cooperation is an important means for developing and strengthening the economies of developing countries. To that end, we have made modest but encouraging progress with respect to regional integration. Mauritius pursues an active policy of integration through subregional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Indian Ocean Commission and the Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation. While relations with our traditional development and trade partners continue to feature prominently in the foreign policy of Mauritius, we intend to take vigorous steps towards the development of strategic partnerships with member States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as with Latin American countries.

Allow me to reiterate before the Assembly our legitimate sovereignty claim over the Chagos Archipelago, including the island of Diego Garcia, which was detached by the United Kingdom from the territory of Mauritius prior to our independence, in violation of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960 and resolution 2066 (XX) of 1965. The people of the Chagos Archipelago, who were evicted from the islands, are still struggling for their right to return to their birthplace. We reiterate our call to the United Kingdom to pursue discussions with us for an early settlement of this issue. Likewise, we appeal to the French Government to expedite the process of resolving the issue of the sovereignty of Tromelin through dialogue in the spirit of friendship and trust that has always characterized our relationship.

(*spoke in French*)

Here, I should like to say a few words in French to show my country's attachment to and respect for cultures and languages in all their diversity. Some of those languages, including French, have been bequeathed to us by history.

People have struggled throughout history to live better, but humankind continues to suffer. That remains true, unfortunately, for the developing countries, and those of the African continent in particular. The dawn of the third millennium has seen the expansion of assistance projects, including the Millennium Development Goals, to improve the fate of the weak and impoverished. We are committed to reducing extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

The International Organization of la Francophonie, as announced in November 2004 at its tenth summit in Ouagadougou, is involved in that global struggle. We need to reinvent ourselves, get off the beaten track, and find new ways to attain our objectives as soon as possible. In that respect, we welcome the contribution of the French-speaking family in that joint action.

(*spoke in English*)

From this very rostrum 37 years ago, when Mauritius acceded to United Nations membership in 1968, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, then Prime Minister and father of the Mauritian nation, firmly advocated a secure, stable and just world:

> "[M]en of goodwill are constantly trying to find a formula by which the underprivileged can banish inequality and fear and aspire to a place in the sun." (*A/PV.1643*, para. 100)

Today, those aspirations are more valid than ever as the comity of nations engages in the quest for freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom to live in dignity. Providing mankind with those freedoms remains the primary goal of the United Nations.

In that spirit, I wish to announce that my Government has made a commitment in the Clinton Global Initiative to organizing an international conference on poverty and development, which will be results-oriented.

Today, as we celebrate the sixtieth year of its existence, let us strive to become what we were always meant to be — a truly representative body of "We the peoples of the United Nations", acting in defence of their welfare and the advancement of their interests above all else. That must remain our unflinching objective, and Mauritius pledges to fully play its part in that noble endeavour.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): The sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations coincides with the commemoration of my country's twenty-fifth year of independence. The preamble to the Constitution of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reaffirms that our nation is founded on the belief in the supremacy of God and the freedom and dignity of man. Our national motto, *Pax et justitia* — Peace and justice — symbolizes both our reality and our dream. The universal ideals which inspired the founding fathers of the United Nations are those which prompted the lofty proclamations in my nation's Constitution. The United Nations Charter taught us a truth, as though engraved on a tablet of stone, that while some sleep to dream, we must dream to change the world for the better.

We in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines accept unequivocally the fulcrum around which the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting revolves, namely, to create a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic world, and to undertake concrete measures to continue finding ways to implement the conclusions of the Millennium Summit and other major United Nations gatherings so as to provide multilateral solutions to the problems which touch and concern development, peace and collective security, human rights and the rule of law, and the strengthening of the United Nations.

Yet the outcome document, though certainly a codified and presumably consensual package, falls short of what is truly demanded by these extraordinary, challenging times in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The larger and more powerful nations are gripped by an unreasonable fear which, in the process, constrains them from being reasonably fair. Less powerful nation-States and those which are small and weak internationally often beat their collective chests with an unbecoming self-righteous purity that restrains them from knowing or understanding what impurity is, even within themselves.

So, an unwholesome stand-off results. Meanwhile, around us all, there is a carnival of misery, a festival of guns. A Caribbean poet laureate tells us that the faces of men and women are strained and anxious. Many, if not most persons, become sceptical — nay, cynical — of the grand efforts of the world's leaders. They search instead for an amazing grace which makes the blind to see and the wretched to be saved. Along the way, the majesty of faith becomes metamorphosed, in too many of the world's inhabitants, into a believer's extremism. Man's reason cannot quite fathom, this side of eternity, the evil which extremism breeds. That is an enduring conundrum of our times which, in this earthly city, we, amidst all our limitations and weaknesses, must seek to address appropriately with all our possibilities and strengths, but without the baggage of economic, military or cultural imperialism.

Economic imperialism muzzles the mouth with the food that it eats to live and thus builds resentment in that very mouth that eats, and even more so among those who receive no food to eat. Military imperialism begets armed resistance in which a triumph is but a pause in its impermanence. Cultural imperialism distorts the mind, but in that very distortion the seed of its rejection germinates, blossoms and bears a bitter and even chauvinistic fruit. The presumed solutions of the powerful have been shown, historically, to be mirages. Surely, there must be a better way. Nelson Mandela has taught us that. Together, we are the world; we are the future. But of all time, only the future is

ours to desecrate; the present is the past, and the past is our fathers' mischiefs.

Underlying all of this is a seemingly intractable socio-economic product of modern globalization — the contradiction between, on the one hand, a growing inequality in income distribution globally and, on the other, the increasing commonality of consumption patterns. Modern communications, including the revolution in information technology, have connected the world as never before. Yet, that very enhanced connection breeds, justifiably, a great impatience among those who are most disadvantaged. Economic adjustment has to be made more swiftly. Time is of the essence, but that very swiftness engenders socio-economic dislocation, which poses immense difficulties for political management.

Those profound challenges require a series of measures, including more official development assistance more speedily disbursed, a fair system of international trade, international peace based on tried and tested principles of international law, appropriate reformation of the United Nations and its associate institutions, and a more tolerant and educated population worldwide. But we must set about doing so immediately with conviction, resolution, solidarity and dignity. The alternative is apocalypse now.

No difficulties, no hardships, no crises, can justify terrorism. Terrorism wounds the poor and disadvantaged ever so much. Its barbarism must continue to be resisted by civilized peoples and nations internationally. No space must be given to terrorism.

A small multi-island nation like Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has a bundle of special needs. We are, therefore, encouraged by the collective recognition by all the Member States of the United Nations that special needs and vulnerabilities attend small island developing States. We are heartened, too, by the reaffirmation of the Member States' commitment to address these special needs and vulnerabilities. There are reams of paper commitments in the Mauritius Strategy adopted by the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, in the Barbados Programme of Action and in the outcome document of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly.

We realize that the just-concluded United Nations High-level Plenary Meeting has undertaken to promote greater international cooperation and partnership for the implementation of the solemn commitments through, among other things, the mobilization of domestic and international resources, the promotion of international trade as an engine for development and increased international financial and technical cooperation.

These splendid commitments and undertakings, like all words, must be made flesh if they are to signify anything. To be sure, heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard will be sweeter in uplifting action. In this regard, I reaffirm, without here repeating, all that I stated in my speech to this body last Friday, 16 September, on the development agenda focused on the Millennium Development Goals and a sustainable condition beyond them for countries like my own. Certainly, a fair resolution to the banana trade impasse in Europe must be fashioned without condemning our poor banana farmers and workers to further penury and misery.

The recent occurrences in Asia, the Caribbean and the southern United States of devastating storms and hurricanes, and in Africa, of terrible droughts, demand a more coordinated and rational approach internationally to issues of climate change, disaster preparedness, and post-disaster rehabilitation. By and large, there have been ad hoc national, as distinct from international, approaches. To the extent that international mechanisms exist for prompt and appropriate relief work, they are clearly inadequate for the tasks at hand.

This is undoubtedly an area in which the United Nations and one or more of its agencies or associate institutions ought to be able to make a significant difference to the well being of real flesh-and-blood people. After all, natural disasters respect no territorial boundaries or power blocs; calamities from nature have a studied ideological neutrality. They are the same sad songs heard from ancient times by emperor, vassals and clown; and in modern times, increasingly by the rich and the poor. But they afflict the poor more disastrously than any other group. This matter demands urgent international attention. The pain and anguish evoked by President George Bush in his most recent speech on the Katrina disaster must surely move to concerted international action even those who stand amid the alien corn.

A sustained, coordinated response is needed if we are to avoid an ignoble "disaster fatigue" that treats a natural disaster in one country as a momentary distraction from normalcy, as television images determine, until the next one arrives. Grenada is a case in point. It was laid waste in September 2004 by Hurricane Ivan, but its recovery effort has been slowed by the focus on the more recent catastrophes from nature in South Asia, Niger and the southern United States. Grenada still cries out for massive international assistance. We must help. There is still an enduring need, even after the television cameras have gone elsewhere. This applies, too, in relation to man-made disasters, such as in Darfur.

The ever-deteriorating state of affairs in our Caribbean Community (CARICOM) neighbour Haiti demonstrates vividly the inherent dangers of meddling with the democratic process. Since I spoke on the issue, more in sadness than in anger, one year ago, the situation has disintegrated. The so-called Government, implanted without any mandate from the people, has neither the political will nor the popular support to undertake the measures necessary to return that poor, traumatized country to some semblance of normalcy. There has been no serious effort at disarming the gangs that roam the towns and countryside and practice mob justice. Political victimization continues apace with the cruel detention and violation of the human rights of former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, the most glaring example; while, on the other side of the coin, the decision of the Supreme Court to quash the sentences of 15 thugs from the Front for Advancement and Progress in Haiti (FRAPH), convicted of involvement in the 1994 Raboteau massacre, has all the elements of political motivation.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, with its CARICOM partners, is anxious to welcome Haiti back into the organs of our regional body. But it would be a betrayal of all that we hold dear to ignore the interruption of democracy, the abuses of human rights and the breakdown of law and order merely to appease perfidious power. We support the work of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), while believing that the United Nations forces have neither the manpower nor the resources required to perform the miracle that they have been entrusted to conjure.

From time to time, one or more of our traditional friends and allies have shown displeasure at one or more of our decisions in the field of international relations. Some appear not to appreciate the necessity and desirability of small States, such as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, seeking, and oft-times finding, more economic and political space to enhance their capacity to address more efficaciously the harsh winds from the external political economy and to do so in the interest of our people's humanization. No one has anything to fear from us. None of our friends can reasonably ask us to adopt their enemies as our own. It is part of our quest to get adversaries to speak sensibly to one another and resolve their differences, particularly if they are our neighbours. We pick fights with no one; and we do not pick other people's fights.

One of the best and most loyal friends over our country's 25 years of independence has been the Republic of China on Taiwan. Our relationship has been exemplary and is characterized by mutual respect, solidarity and a desire for international peace, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Taiwan, a magnificent political expression of the Chinese civilization, has partnered beautifully with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, a component of our Caribbean civilization. We unequivocally support the quest of Taiwan to be represented at the United Nations and other international bodies. It is unfair, unreasonable and irrational to exclude a country of 23 million persons, with a thriving economy and a nobility of purpose, from the United Nations. Further, we urge the United Nations to take the lead in promoting constructive dialogue and friendly engagement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China on Taiwan. Bellicose conduct across the Taiwan Strait cannot be condoned in a world striving for enhanced peace and collective security.

Let me end by expressing the hope that the United Nations may achieve, in the next 60 years, greater and greater success in its goals of bringing hope to the hopeless, providing food for the hungry and spreading peace, stability and sustainability for now and forever. Let this not be the road less travelled.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to congratulate you upon your election as President of the General Assembly during its historic sixtieth session. I am fully confident that you will lead its deliberations towards a successful conclusion. I also would like to express my appreciation for the contribution of the Foreign Minister of Gabon during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I commend the efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has sought to make significant changes to this Organization so as to make it better able to meet the demands of the twenty-first century, as envisaged in his report and in his recommendations before this session.

The historical context of the creation of our current international order, with its mechanisms and institutions, is a part of a world different from that of today. That world preceded both the cold war and subsequent events, developments and changes in regional and international arenas. Our session this year is, in essence, an important moment in the progress of international collective efforts, prompting us today to seek a new vision and to find systems that are better developed in both their means and structures, in order to address contemporary dangers and threats, as well as rapid world changes.

The world today is witnessing many changes that are due to the interdependence of States and to various facts, balances and dangers around the world. As a result, we are obliged to revisit the international collective security system, to thoroughly study the concepts and structures of the United Nations and to provide creative initiatives to address such matters in the twenty-first century spirit of modernity. His Highness Shaikh Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, the Crown Prince, underlined this issue in his address on behalf of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, King of Bahrain, before the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on 15 September 2005.

These might be the urgent needs that prompted the Secretary-General to crystallize all this in a series of initiatives and meetings at the beginning of the third millennium, by announcing suggestions for the millennium and its development goals. In his important report to this session, entitled "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), the Secretary-General explained his vision in a comprehensive and in-depth manner, along with the bases and aims of the work of the international order of our world today. Based on this order we can move towards a modern, capable and democratic system to achieve the three important types of freedom, namely freedom to live in dignity, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. This comprehensive vision of the Secretary-General on issues of international security, development and human rights deserves commendation and thorough and deep analysis in order to reach a broad international consensus.

The dangerous escalation today in terrorism and its culture, derived from hatred and fanaticism, are the most serious dangers threatening the international community everywhere. They require us to develop an integrated strategy that halts terrorism and the culture of death and violence that terrorism advocates. This also re-emphasizes the common responsibility of States and societies to find a means to address the root causes of terrorism.

We must state that an effective counter-terrorism strategy has to balance the needs of human security and adherence to international human rights instruments and treaties, and has to close loopholes in treaties dealing with the phenomenon of terrorism.

In this context, the Kingdom of Bahrain has continued its domestic efforts and its efforts in the Gulf Region with its partner Gulf Cooperation Council countries to fight money-laundering and the financing of terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa geographically, and on the security cooperation level, politically and practically. In this regard, the Kingdom of Bahrain endorses and supports the proposal of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdulla Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, King of the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to establish an international centre to fight terrorism. The Kingdom of Bahrain has also submitted its instruments of accession to the United Nations Secretariat in New York for many conventions relating to the fight against terrorism, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1373 (2001).

The greatest security challenge in the Middle East is not simply to end terrorism and violence; it also

includes the absence of a just and comprehensive peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict, which is an ongoing source of confrontation and a threat to stability and which brings despair to those who have legitimate hopes for a life of dignity and regional economic progress.

We must not forget that the year 2005 has opened a path that might lead to an opportunity for peace, through the positive internal developments on the Palestinian side and through Arab and international support for the new leadership of President Mahmood Abbas and his moves towards achieving peace, reducing tension, and promoting democracy.

We welcome the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and hope that this withdrawal will be a significant step towards a just and comprehensive peace in the area. We also hope that this withdrawal will be a part of the road map plan.

The achievement of security, stability and peace in the Middle East requires an end to the Israeli occupation of all Arab territories and the full implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions, as reaffirmed by the Arab initiative adopted by the Arab Summit in Beirut in 2002. That was reaffirmed once again by the latest Arab Summit held this year in Algiers. A just and comprehensive peace cannot be achieved, except through the end of the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including the Syrian Golan and the rest of the Lebanese territories, through the return of Palestinian refugees and through the establishment of the Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Notwithstanding the democratic choice of the Iraqi people in the elections last January and the appointment of a transitional Government and in spite of the steps taken during the political process and the preparation of the draft constitution, the situation in Iraq today remains very delicate and sensitive. It represents a challenge to international and regional security. It threatens not only the security of Iraq and the region, but also Iraq's unity, its territorial integrity, cohesion and the consensus of its people.

Overcoming this dilemma can be achieved only through a strong historical national consensus on Iraq's territorial integrity and ethnic diversity, a comprehensive political process and participation in shaping the future of Iraq. This national consensus alone is the guarantee for Iraq to overcome its current predicament and to move from this difficult ordeal to an era of stability, security and peace.

In this context, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its support for the Iraqi people and calls upon all to continue regional and international support for Iraq in order that it may fulfil its responsibilities towards its people and the Arab nation as a whole.

In the context of regional security in the Gulf region, the peaceful settlement, either through negotiations or international arbitration, of the long dispute between the United Arab Emirates and its brother, the Islamic Republic of Iran, regarding the three Emirate islands, especially now that there is a new Iranian leadership, will enable the Gulf region to divert its efforts and natural resources to face the challenges of development, security, peace and cooperation.

In the area of development and progress, the Kingdom of Bahrain has followed a policy of openness, reform and participation and democracy enhancement, moving towards social, cultural and civil modernization that goes hand in hand with our culture, deep-rooted traditions and values.

In the context of its efforts to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals, the Kingdom of Bahrain has taken significant steps to enable women to assume positions of leadership in various walks of life, by launching a new national strategy to promote Bahraini women. Accordingly, in putting forward its candidature for the presidency of the forthcoming sixty-first session of the General Assembly, it has selected a capable person who represents Bahraini women, and who demonstrates experience, wisdom and diplomatic skill. We hope that this nomination will receive wide agreement among Member States.

Reaffirming its regional and international status as an economic, financial and banking centre and as part of its efforts to attract greater investment and capital, create employment opportunities for its citizens and strengthen the national economy, the Kingdom of Bahrain has embarked on many major economic and investment projects that will strengthen and enhance the economic and trade position of Bahrain at the regional and international levels.

Efforts and initiatives have continued over many decades to achieve a collective security system that will free humanity from the dangers of destruction and

annihilation by prohibiting the proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has not achieved its goals despite accession by the majority of countries of the world, including all Arab countries. In this regard, we call upon the international community to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in both the Middle East and the Gulf region.

We hope that sincere and concerted efforts will continue among Member States to reach a consensus on the reform of the Organization.

We trust that the framework of the proposed expansion of the Security Council will reflect the consensus of Member States with a clear and realistic vision and will take into account the interests and expectations of the Arab nations with their profound influence on the political stability, economy, peace and security in the whole world.

The recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General in his report "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005) represent comprehensive and ambitious views and aspirations in relation not only to the Security Council, which is entrusted by the Charter with the maintenance of international peace and security, but also to establishing the basis for the entire international system.

We all look forward, during this session, to the opening of historic negotiations on the reforms of United Nations organs as well as on working methods. The Kingdom of Bahrain supports the United Nations reform initiative and believes in the necessity of continued negotiations and discussions among Member States in order to reach the results that we all aspire to.

The world today, this post-cold-war world, is not yet free of the scourge of war, and its people are still vulnerable to the consequences of terrorism and violence.

Today, we urgently need a more modern, stronger, reinvigorated and more credible Organization: an Organization that will bring all nations together and balance their interests, resolve conflicts, build peace and security, uphold justice and the rule of law, oblige all to abide by the provisions of the Charter and international legal resolutions, adapt to the changes of the twenty-first century and meet successfully its challenges.

We look forward to a reformed United Nations, which we hope will come into existence soon.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Li Zhaoxing, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China.

Mr. Li Zhaoxing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): May I begin by extending my congratulations on your election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I am confident that under your guidance this session will achieve fruitful results. I also wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere respects to Mr. Jean Ping, President at the previous session, and to the Secretary-General.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the world war against fascism and the founding of the United Nations. Just a few days ago in this Hall, world leaders solemnly adopted the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting (resolution 60/1). Now, it falls to us to fulfil the important and pressing task of working towards a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity by translating that document into action and turning fine words into reality. This session should serve to promote peace, harmony and common development.

We want peaceful development. Progress of mankind needs a peaceful environment. Stability and security of one country cannot be built on the turbulence or crisis of another. Only a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination will enable us to develop in peace and safeguard peace through development.

We want harmonious development. To build a better future is the long-cherished dream of mankind. Any development strategy should be guided by a long-term and holistic perspective instead of immediate and sectoral benefits. Therefore, we should work together for more democratic and law-based international relations and a harmonious environment in which countries respect one another, treat one another as equals, and in which different cultures can emulate and interchange with each other.

We want common development. No model of development that benefits only a few countries or a small group of people is acceptable or sustainable. Countries should cooperate with each other more closely so that economic globalization may yield successful results, benefit-sharing and common prosperity.

This session should serve to push forward reforms of the United Nations and strengthen its role. Having weathered 60 years of vicissitudes, the United Nations needs multifaceted and multidimensional reforms so as to be able to make a greater contribution to mankind's noble cause of peace and development.

The position of the United Nations as the core of the world collective security mechanism must be strengthened so that it can perform its duty of safeguarding peace in a more effective way. China supports the efforts to enhance the Organization's capacity on conflict prevention, mediation and good offices. We also favour a greater role by the Secretary-General in this respect and the fostering of a preventive culture.

We support the efforts to strengthen United Nations peacekeeping operations, particularly with regard to rapid deployment capacity and strategic preparedness, as well as the capacity to fully mobilize regional organizations and their resources under the leadership of the Security Council.

China supports the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission to more effectively coordinate United Nations efforts in the areas of peacekeeping, post-conflict rehabilitation and development. In that respect, the Economic and Social Council and other development assistance agencies should have an important role to play in the Commission.

It has been our consistent position to oppose the use or threat of force in international relations. We do not support the reinterpretation or revision of the provisions in the Charter of the United Nations related to the right of self-defence. Should an occasion arise that calls for the use of force, it is the Security Council that should make sound judgements and take prudent decisions as to the merits of the situation.

The international community should continue to press ahead with the international process on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation; safeguard and enhance the authority and effectiveness of existing multilateral treaties; give full scope to the role of the United Nations and other international organizations in the area of non-proliferation; and seek solutions to related issues by political and diplomatic means.

The United Nations should be able to cope more effectively with non-traditional security threats. We welcome the comprehensive strategy on counter-terrorism proposed by the Secretary-General, and we hope to see the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, taking full account of the concerns of various parties, particularly developing countries.

In the effort to reduce and prevent large-scale humanitarian crises, the international community should strictly observe the United Nations Charter, respect the opinions of the countries or organizations concerned and, with the Security Council's authorization, explore, to the greatest extent possible, peaceful settlement within the United Nations framework. We oppose any rash intervention carried out on the basis of the claim that a nation is unable or unwilling to protect its own citizens.

Development should be a main focus of United Nations reform. Although China is a low-income developing country, it is prepared to contribute as much as it can to international cooperation for development. As President Hu Jintao announced at the summit, China will take substantive steps in five areas. We will join hands with all Members to advance reforms in the area of development so as to facilitate the resolution of development issues. The United Nations should put in place a fair and rational Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) review framework to assess progress made in various countries and to monitor follow-up of international cooperation and aid commitments. We support the coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council in development-related areas.

The Doha Round should embody development in its focus, paying more attention and taking actions to address the concerns of developing countries, particularly with regard to agricultural produce and special and differential treatment. China has decided to grant zero-tariff treatment to some commodities from 39 least developed countries, which will cover the majority of China's imports from those countries.

China is in favour of incorporating the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and the building of the public health sector into the development programmes and activities of various countries and of the United Nations. We will be submitting at the current session a draft resolution on strengthening global capacity-building in the area of public health. In the next three years, we plan to provide more aid and medicine to

developing countries for preventing and treating malaria and other communicable diseases and to help them establish and reform their public health systems and train medical personnel.

The international community — particularly developed countries — should take substantive steps to help developing countries break the vicious circle of debt. Such steps include substantial debt reduction and the streamlining of debt relief procedures and requirements. In the next two years, China will write off or otherwise cancel the overdue portions, as of the end of 2004, of interest-free or low-interest Government loans owed by all heavily indebted poor countries having diplomatic relations with China.

We call on the United Nations to give priority to helping developing countries to strengthen their capacity-building. China will help developing countries train 30,000 people for various professions in the next three years.

My country also favours setting a timetable for developed countries to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance. New fund-raising methods should be explored so as to put more funds into development.

China pledges $10 billion in concessional loans to developing countries in the next three years within the framework of South-South cooperation.

The Charter of the United Nations grants the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. A highly efficient, responsible and representative Council serves the long-term interests of the United Nations and the common interests of all its Member States.

China supports reform of the Security Council aimed at strengthening its authority and efficiency and improving its working methods. The representation of developing countries, particularly African countries, should be increased so that small and medium-sized countries would have more say in the Council's decision-making. No reform proposal can work that addresses only the concerns of a few countries, disregarding the interests of the majority of countries, and treats developing countries in Africa and in other parts of the world unfairly.

China supports the principle of cooperation based on democratic consultation. As reform will affect the future of the United Nations and the interests of various parties, there should be no artificial timeframes or attempts to force decisions through a vote. Instead, Member States should seek consensus through dialogue and consultation and in accordance with the principle of democratic international relations.

China embraces the spirit of unity and cooperation. The United Nations family has 191 Members. Unity is the source of strength. We want unity, not division. As long as Member States respect one another's interests, accommodate one another's concerns and show pragmatism and flexibility, we will be able to find a reform path that is acceptable to all.

The current session should focus on Africa. African countries make up a quarter of the United Nations membership, and their populations account for 13 per cent of the world's total population. If there is no stability in Africa, the world will have no peace. If Africa remains poor, there will be no development for the world. The outcome document of the summit calls for efforts to meet the special needs of Africa. I believe that that is correct and necessary.

Despite the gratifying progress made in Africa in recent years, conflicts in some of its regions have persisted. The Security Council should pay special attention to African problems and give them priority on its agenda. That means not only devoting more Council meetings to African issues, but also, and more important, taking concrete actions to heed Africa's voice, respect its views and accommodate its concerns.

China applauds the mediation and good offices of the African Union and other regional organizations aimed at conflict settlement in Africa. We support close cooperation between the Security Council and those organizations by providing them with funds, logistics and technical assistance to strengthen their peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction capacities.

African countries face difficulties in the area of development, particularly in attaining the MDGs. More than 300 million people are still living under the poverty line. One third of all children are malnourished. More than 30 million people are suffering from HIV/AIDS. With less than 2 per cent of the world's economic aggregate, Africa is weighed down by debts amounting to $300 billion. All of that poses a challenge to the conscience of mankind.

The international community should reach a global consensus on African development and help the continent to achieve the MDGs on schedule by implementing the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Those who provide assistance must do so in all sincerity and respect the right of African countries to make their own decisions. Assistance must also have a clear aim: to meet the basic and long-term needs of the African people. Assistance is by no means charity or a gift; it is a response to the call for mutual benefit and common development. Furthermore, it is our moral duty to help the needy and redress injustices.

In the twentieth century, Africa shook off colonial rule and achieved national liberation. That was an epoch-making event. The twenty-first century will bring peace and development to Africa — it is historically inevitable. The Chinese people will continue to stand beside their African brothers and sisters on that journey of historic significance.

The recently concluded Six-Party Talks in Beijing on the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue have reached an important consensus and issued a joint declaration, marking an important step forward in the Talks and a crystallization of the political will and diligence of the parties concerned. It also reflects the common aspiration of the international community. Because it was so hard-won, this result needs to be especially prized. We hope that the parties will continue to work together to promote further progress in the Six-Party Talks, resolve the nuclear issue on the Peninsula through dialogue and by peaceful means, ensure lasting peace and stability in the region and realize its common goals for development and prosperity. The Chinese Government will continue to make a positive contribution in that regard.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

Mr. Pérez Roque (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Actually, we have no reason to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. The chaotic, unequal and insecure world in which we are now living is not much of a tribute to those who gathered on 26 June 1945 in San Francisco to found the United Nations.

From the conclusion of the Millennium Summit in 2000 until today, more of the world's children have died of preventable diseases than all of the victims of the Second World War put together.

The aggression against Iraq was launched, not just without regard to, but even counter to the opinion of the international community. That happened just two and a half years after having solemnly proclaimed at the Millennium Summit that "We are determined to establish a just and lasting peace all over the world in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter" (*resolution 55/2, para. 4*). The General Assembly could not even meet to discuss it. The Security Council was ignored and then had to undergo the humiliation of docilely accepting a predatory war that had earlier been opposed by a majority of its members.

There is a clear explanation for the current state of affairs, which is that the order enshrined in the Charter pertained to a bipolar world and to a balance of power that no longer exists today. "We, the peoples" — as the Charter says — must bear the burden of a unipolar world, in which a single super-Power imposes its whims and selfish interests on the United Nations and the international community.

Therefore, trying to get the United Nations to function in conformity with the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter is make-believe. It is not possible. And it will not be possible as long as third world countries, which make up the majority of the world, fail to unite and fight together for their rights.

Were the United States Government to comply with Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), adopted on 28 September 2001, and to the international conventions on terrorism, it would extradite the terrorist Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela and release the five young Cuban anti-terrorist fighters who have been subjected to cruel and unjust imprisonment for seven years.

Had the United States Government allowed the United Nations to act in accordance with the Charter, the Iraqi people would not have been invaded so that they could be robbed of their petroleum, the Palestinian people would exercise sovereignty over their territory and Cuba would not continue to be blockaded. Nor would there be billions of illiterate people or 900 million starving human beings in the world.

That explains the failure of last week's summit, which was convened to assess compliance with the

modest commitments entered into to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals and which ended as a pitiful imitation of what should have been a serious and committed debate concerning the grave problems currently besetting humankind. It was a complete farce. It was of no interest to the powerful. Their selfish and hegemonic interests run counter to the aspiration for a more just and better world for all.

The scandalous pressures and blackmail brought to bear on Member States, after the United States Ambassador brandished the stick and attempted to impose 750 amendments on the outcome document, will go down in history as the most eloquent evidence that a new world and a new United Nations must be built, with respect for and recognition of the right to peace, sovereignty and development for all, without genocidal wars, blockades or injustice. The final negotiations, from which most United Nations Members were excluded, and the outcome document that was adopted, in which issues of vital interest for our peoples have been omitted, is a vivid illustration of what we are talking about.

While we await the day in which that new world and the new United Nations can become a reality, we, the peoples, will continue to fight and, through our resistance, win once again the rights currently denied to us.

The powerful only talk about interventions and preventive wars, about imposing draconian conditions or the most efficient ways to control the United Nations, while attempting to legitimize concepts such as the so-called responsibility to protect, which could be used one day to justify acts of aggression against our countries. Let us spell this out clearly: today there is no right to peace for the small.

We as Cubans understand this very well, and we rely on the solidarity of peoples, on our united front and on our weapons, which have never been used except to defend just causes. Our brothers and sisters in Africa know this well.

We are not pessimists; we are revolutionaries. We do not surrender or conform. Today, more resolutely than ever, we affirm that "we, the peoples" will overcome.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

Mr. Albar (Malaysia): Malaysia, as the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement and in its own name, wishes to convey our congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I am confident that, under your able stewardship, the work of the Assembly will reach a successful conclusion. I wish to assure you of the fullest cooperation of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Malaysian delegation.

Let me also pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for his dedication and for the successful manner in which he conducted the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, which was an exceptionally challenging one. The consultations and negotiations led to the successful adoption of the final outcome document at the world summit last Friday.

Six decades ago, the peoples of the world, including those under oppression and colonialism, celebrated the creation of the United Nations. The United Nations, as envisaged by its founders, was a beacon of hope for the world following the death and destruction wrought by the Second World War.

Malaysia fully and consistently subscribes to the centrality of the United Nations and thus to the multilateral principles which have allowed the evolution of an international order predicated on rule-based interaction among States, thus creating a predictable and stable international environment. Without multilateralism, small or weak States could not hope for a democratic international order within which they could aspire to independence, peace and stability, development and prosperity.

Today, even as we meet here, multilateralism has come under increasing threat. We believe that attempts to unilaterally rewrite or redefine the normative framework is a dangerous experiment. Without the stabilizing effect of such a framework, we would only create uncertainty and confusion in the international order.

The challenge confronting humankind in our time is to address, comprehensively and collectively, the multifaceted threats to our survival and well-being in the areas of peace and security, poverty and development, human rights and democracy.

In that regard, the outcome document has sought to give a fresh lease on life to multilateralism, both in substance and in structure. As we continue our

discussions to reshape and redirect the Organization, we must ensure that the General Assembly remains the true embodiment of the will of the world community.

All of us must be committed to strengthening the General Assembly so that it reflects the true voice of democracy, transparency and accountability. At this juncture, let me voice Malaysia's support for the checklist of items to be implemented during the current session, as mapped out by the Secretary-General in his address last Saturday. I hope that, by the time we meet again next year, the Secretary-General's report will be able to illustrate a marked improvement in the world situation, in particular towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and the greater efficiency and effectiveness of the Secretariat.

Driven by a common sense of purpose and determined political will, we must operationalize the commitments we have undertaken at the major United Nations conferences and summits of recent years. Our words must be matched by our actions. This must represent the beginning of the collective redoubling of efforts that is necessary to secure a more peaceful and just world. Where we had been unable to push the agenda on certain issues, we must now pursue them as part of an ongoing process in the reform of the United Nations. Where efforts to reach agreement have failed altogether, such as on the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation, we must now focus our energies in order to keep the issues alive until we achieve consensus.

Malaysia is disappointed by the absence of any reference to disarmament and non-proliferation in the outcome document. I hope that this is not construed as a loss of interest by the international community or as an indication that it has since fallen off our radar of concern. Our collective call for nuclear-weapon States to effect complete and general disarmament as well as to ensure the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons must not be compromised.

It is indeed regrettable that the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) earlier this year failed. That failure will intensify the adverse repercussions on the disarmament regime, painstakingly negotiated since the end of the Second World War. We must therefore, at this session, reiterate and, indeed, reaffirm the importance of the full and non-selective implementation of the three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, namely: nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

We must also rededicate our efforts towards the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

The world spent an estimated $1 trillion on global military expenditures last year. Doubtless, much of that went to strengthening the military arsenals of States that feel constantly under threat; yet some of that must also have been contributed by terrorists purchasing arms for their condemnable acts. The sale of small arms and light weapons has wrought untold suffering on unsuspecting peoples everywhere. The international community must collectively call on States to divert such military spending to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and to strengthening the development infrastructure. This would go far towards creating a just and equitable order, which in turn would lead to a safer world.

Since the adoption of the MDGs five years ago, the burdens and obstacles faced by developing countries seem to have increased, with almost no amelioration of the problems that already existed at the time. Eight years ago, East Asia was battered by a financial crisis, which in turn had trans-regional repercussions, adversely affecting the health of the global economy. Appeals by developing countries to reform the international financial architecture fell on deaf ears. As a result, the international financial architecture continues to be vulnerable to similar crises.

Now, even as that and other equally important problems remain unresolved, we are faced with yet another threat — a prolonged and sustained increase in oil prices, which, even as we speak, threatens to imperil the global economy. Continuous increases in oil prices are placing a disproportionate burden on developing countries, thereby impoverishing them even further. It is morally reprehensible that the poor are expected to absorb the cost of instabilities of production. In many quarters of the global community, the unbridled free market in particular is viewed as rapacious and unfeeling.

If the United Nations is to remain relevant to the world at large, it must be able to discuss and decide on precisely issues such as these, which not only have an impact on our day-to-day lives but also have long-term

implications, including for peace and security. If wars in the past were fought over ideology, conflicts in the future will be due to competition for markets and scarce natural resources, blurring the lines between economics, development and security. Accordingly, the United Nations must be prepared to address the interrelated and cross-cutting issues that give rise to such conflicts.

Globalization, with its myriad challenges and opportunities, has left many in the developing countries unable to compete in an open and free-market system. Following the current trajectory, the international economic system will continue to remain unjust, punishing the poor for being unable to influence, much less dictate, their destinies. Much remains to be done to equalize the field between the rich and the rest. Aid and debt cancellation, while they are welcome and reduce the burden on developing countries, have in the long term only limited effect. It is trade that needs to be expanded and made more fair and equitable. We must press ahead towards a universal, rule-based, open, non-discriminatory, fair and equitable multilateral trading system. It is widely recognized that trade has a multiplier effect and is able to lift poor communities towards becoming self-sustaining ones. Trade can create competitive markets that benefit all.

Malaysia condemns all acts, methods and practices of terrorism. As terrorism is a global phenomenon that transcends national boundaries, fighting terrorism demands effective international action in accordance with the Charter and universally recognized principles of international relations and international law.

In countering terrorism, the use of conventional military force alone is insufficient. To truly address the scourge and prevent its re-emergence elsewhere over time, we must deal with the root causes of terrorism in order to provide a lasting solution that will deny those committing such acts of violence sympathy and keep them from gaining new recruits. While countering their actions, we must at the same time win the hearts and minds of the people in order to ensure that our victory will not be short-lived.

No one group acting alone will be able to achieve total success. Clearly, success requires a sense of common purpose. The portrayal of any particular grouping of peoples as fanatical terrorists led by a religion of war is, therefore, irresponsible and would derail any attempt at forging a common and united front against terrorism. It is our collective duty to respond effectively to the legitimate grievances of affected communities, wherever they may be, so as to overcome their feelings of marginalization, deprivation, oppression and injustice. The international community as a whole must take a stand to stop actions that contribute directly or indirectly to the perpetuation of injustice, oppression or aggression. Misunderstanding and fear of "the other" must be replaced by respect, dialogue, understanding and tolerance. In this context, we can build a universal culture that respects diversity so that goodwill and harmony can thrive.

The interests and concerns of minority groups must not be sidelined in favour of the majority. Minorities too have rights that must be protected by their Government. Over time, the grievances of minority groups over their being sidelined will necessarily seek an outlet.

There is a national as well as an international dimension to the issue of peaceful and cooperative co-existence. Understanding and respect between religions, cultures and civilizations become necessary prerequisites for dialogue and the avoidance of conflicts. If Governments can succeed in instituting a culture of tolerance and moderation among people at the domestic level, it will become easier for nation States to cooperate in promoting tolerance and moderation among nationalities and cultures at the international level. We must institute the precepts of justice, respect and understanding in our day-to-day dealings. This would, in turn, lead to fairness, goodwill and harmony in our relations.

The ideas of good governance, democracy and accountability to God and our peoples are not antithetical to Islam. They are clearly embodied in the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet Mohammed. For our own part in Malaysia, we believe that the obligation to act based on religious imperatives can be directed towards good, progress and development. We call this approach Islam Hadhari, literally civilizational Islam, which is an approach towards a progressive and humanistic civilization that is consistent with the objective of creating a stable international world order.

The approach that Malaysia has taken emphasizes that progress, development, knowledge and good

governance as enshrined in the teachings of Islam, are compatible with modernity and yet are firmly rooted in the ethical, moral and universal values that will guarantee the future of humankind. It is an approach that values substance over form and promotes tolerance and understanding, moderation and peace, and certainly, enlightenment.

In our preoccupation with the reform of the United Nations, we must not lose sight of the need to address and resolve, on a priority basis, one of the most important outstanding issues confronting this Organization: the question of Palestine. While we all welcome the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, it should be part of the Road Map and should be quickly followed by similar measures in the West Bank. The issue of settlements must not be left unresolved, including in and around Jerusalem, as well as the construction of the Separation Wall, which has already been pronounced illegal by the International Court of Justice. Such activities must cease forthwith. The international community, particularly the United Nations, must continue to remain engaged with this issue until the goal of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine is realized.

Rich or poor, strong or weak, whatever our religion or belief, one fact is inescapable: we inhabit one world, our global village. Sixty years ago, the founders of our universal Organization came together after witnessing horrors hitherto unimaginable and said that never again could human life be so wantonly extinguished. They also proclaimed that humankind would forevermore work and live together in peace, harmony and common respect. On this historic occasion, my plea is that we return to those hopes and ideals.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of this session, which coincides with the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. We hope that this important session will provide a historic opportunity to review and evaluate the achievements of this Organization and to formulate a political and development vision on strengthening our common action and our ability to maintain international peace and security and achieve sustainable development.

The United Arab Emirates welcomes the Outcome Document of the High-level Plenary Meeting and considers it a positive step towards achieving the MDGs, especially those related to the four main fields, namely development, peace and collective security, human rights, rule of law and the strengthening of the United Nations. At the same time, we hope that our consultations on other unsolved issues will continue in order to reach an international consensus.

In that context, we wish to reaffirm our position calling for the reform of the United Nations, including the increase of permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council, based on a system of equitable geographical distribution that ensures the transparency of the Council's working methods.

We emphasize the importance of reinforcing international commitment to the principles of international and humanitarian law and respect for the sovereignty of States, including their cultural and religious diversity and traditions. We also underline the need to respect the resolutions and recommendations of international legitimacy issued by world summits, including the Millennium Declaration.

We affirm that the challenges of the twenty-first century, including poverty, illiteracy, epidemics, environmental degradation, global terrorism, organized crime and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, are by nature transnational and pose grave threats to all humanity. Therefore, while we supported the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, which will assist countries recovering from civil and regional wars, we call for the utilization of our human cultures and beliefs in joint efforts to address such challenges, including the holding of an international conference on combating terrorism and its causes. Such a conference must provide a clear definition of terrorism, based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law and norms, and must distinguish between terrorism and the legitimate struggle of peoples against foreign occupation. At the same time, we reaffirm our support for the proposal of the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to establish an international centre to combat terrorism.

Firmly convinced of the importance of adopting peaceful solutions in resolving disputes and issues of foreign occupation, particularly in the Middle East and

the Arab Gulf region, the United Arab Emirates calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to its peaceful initiatives aimed at resolving the issue of Iran's occupation of the three islands of the United Arab Emirates — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa — through bilateral negotiations or by referral to the International Court of Justice.

In that context, we reaffirm that all actions taken by Iran since its illegal occupation of the three islands in 1971 are null and void, because they contradict the United Nations Charter, international law, the principles of good neighbourliness and the peaceful coexistence of nations and confidence-building measures. In the light of the impact of that important and delicate issue on the security and the stability of the Arab Gulf region and on the entire world, the United Arab Emirates, along with other countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, looks forward to the Iranian Government's review of its policy in that regard. We also hope that Iran will take a transparent and objective approach in its response to the repeated peaceful initiatives of the countries of the region, which call for the end of Iran's occupation of the three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates and the creation of a positive regional environment conducive to the strengthening of cooperation, good neighbourliness and mutual advantage among the region's countries and to prosperity and stability for its peoples.

We are hopeful that the political transition process in Iraq will be completed and, in that respect, we renew our support for all efforts made by the Iraqi Government to strengthen political dialogue among the various Iraqi factions, achieve national reconciliation and rebuild its national institutions so that Iraq can maintain its unity, territorial sovereignty, independence and stability, and can play its natural role in the region and the world.

The United Arab Emirates welcomes Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank and hopes that the international community will urge Israel to complete its withdrawal from the Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including the Syrian Golan and the Lebanese Shaba'a farms, dismantle the separation wall and discontinue its settlement plans and activities, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, the Arab peace initiative based on the land-for-peace principle, and the Quartet's road map. Furthermore, the international community must strengthen its support of the Palestinian Authority and help it rebuild its national institutions and exploit its natural and economic resources.

We also demand that Israel accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and submit its nuclear facilities to the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions calling for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in the Middle East and the Arab Gulf region.

In spite of the progress made in science and information technology, the international community continues to face a growing economic gap between the North and the South. Therefore, we call for further international efforts to address that imbalance, including the greater participation of developing countries in decision-making in economic and trade matters, and for the commitment of industrialized States to continue their support for development programmes in the developing countries in order to create a fair and just international economic environment in which all peoples enjoy the benefits of prosperity, well-being and development.

The United Arab Emirates has developed humanitarian and financial assistance programmes to assist developing countries and countries affected by conflicts, civil and regional wars and natural disasters. That assistance exceeds the percentage recommended by international conferences on development and the Millennium Development Goals. In that context, the United Arab Emirates has adopted multifaceted development policies and plans to keep pace with international economic and development changes. Those policies include human resources development, the opening of the country's markets to foreign trade and the enhancement of the private sector's role in national development.

In conclusion, we hope that our deliberations at this session will result in a positive outcome that strengthens our joint efforts to realize our peoples' hope and ambition to live in a world in which security, stability, peace, freedom and justice prevail.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jean-François Ndongou, Deputy Minister to the Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of Gabon.

Mr. Ndongou (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, your election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly is indisputably an historic moment, which Gabon appreciates fully, since your country has succeeded Gabon in this post. Thus, I should like to congratulate you most warmly on behalf of my delegation and assure you of Gabon's support throughout your term. I should also like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his immense, bold and tireless actions in favour of the reinvigoration and the restoration of the prestige of the United Nations system. Allow me also to pay well-deserved tribute to the President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of the Republic of Gabon, for his outstanding contribution to the reform of our Organization.

The important document adopted last Friday by the High-level Meeting testifies to this reform effort. I therefore welcome the fact that you have invited us to focus our debate on the follow-up to the measures adopted by the world leaders last week.

Today, 60 years after its creation, the United Nations has stood the test of time. The dysfunctions noted recently highlight the need to press ahead with essential institutional reform. In that connection, a comment by Montesquieu comes to mind and I quote, "When a good thing has disadvantages, it is better to do away with the disadvantages than with the thing itself." The author of *The Spirit of Laws* was suggesting that we need to make a distinction between ideals and human endeavour.

More than an end in itself, the reform process must, whenever necessary, make it possible to adapt the United Nations to the demands of the times and to the many complex mandates entrusted to it. In this context, we should pay particular attention to the General Assembly. It is the most representative forum of the international community, a site par excellence for cooperation, for negotiation and for sharing responsibilities.

The United Nations is the seat of legitimacy and moral authority at the international level and it participates in the ideal of shared destinies of nations and the peoples of the world. This is why Gabon reiterates yet again its support for initiatives aimed at a consensus-based reform of the Security Council, as the Council's expansion should derive from the dual need for representativity and effectiveness.

Once reformed, the United Nations can deal better with the many challenges facing humankind today, such as HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, terrorism, armed conflicts and poverty. The HIV/AIDS pandemic, which affects rich and poor nations alike without distinction, is a serious threat to sparsely-populated countries such as Gabon. More than ever, developing countries call upon the international community to display effective and active solidarity in order to limit the worst effects of this pandemic.

Since vaccine experiments have not yet been conclusive, and the therapeutic trials are still insufficient, efforts must be focused on prevention and on access to antiretroviral drugs in accordance with the agreement concluded within the context of the World Trade Organization. Gabon itself has taken solid initiatives, ranging from awareness campaigns to the implementation of action plans such as the multisectoral strategic plan to combat AIDS, in which the First Lady of Gabon, Madame Edith Lucie Bongo Ondimba, is personally involved. We welcome the fact that the final document of the High-level Meeting reaffirmed the commitment of the international community to fight HIV-AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.

It is undeniable that the global challenges are numerous and interdependent. Environmental degradation has become one of the main threats to life on earth. The consequences of climate change caused by human activity are at the root of natural disasters that are unprecedented in scale. The future of generations to come is thus compromised. It is in this context that the concept of sustainable development, which means in fact intergenerational solidarity, must be made systematic, so as to underlie both public and private policies.

Certainly, the Stockholm conference in 1972 that led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme, the Rio Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and the Johannesburg Conference in 2002 were important stages in the growing awareness of the international community. But, we can and must do better. The French proposal aimed at creating a United Nations organization for the environment, in addition to existing mechanisms, seems to us in this respect very

timely. We should ensure follow-up to this idea, as proposed by the final document of the High-level Meeting. Likewise, following an integrated approach, we support the actions taken by the International Organization of la Francophonie to promote the environment and sustainable development. The most recent Summit of Heads of State of la Francophonie, which was held in Ouagadougou from 26 to 27 November 2004, adopted a document along these lines entitled "A strategic ten-year framework for biodiversity and the protection of the environment throughout the francophone area".

The common heritage of the environment must be the subject of more ambitious and more generous international cooperation that seeks to reduce the gap between two sets of partners that often have contradictory expectations, that is, on the one hand, the developed countries, and, on the other, the developing countries.

What can we say about terrorism, that tentacled creature, that inscrutable threat, whose ubiquity evades vigilance and even punitive measures? Friendly countries have recently endured tragic experiences, and others, unfortunately, have them nearly every day. It has to be said that on 11 September 2001 terrorism sounded the death knell for any feeling of safety.

One of the notable points of the final documents of the High-level Meeting of last week is the firm and unambiguous condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. This is notable progress that will, I am sure, facilitate the efforts of the international community aimed at adopting a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, a task on which the sixtieth session of the General Assembly must focus and to which it must devote itself.

Wishing to support the efforts of the international community to stem this scourge, the Head of State of Gabon has just signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. "Peace within, peace with others and peace amongst others" is a tradition on which Gabon prides itself, a tradition that reflects the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

At the beginning of the third millennium, many African countries were still in the grip of instability and armed conflicts. To find a way out of that impasse and steer towards a more stable and prosperous Africa, African heads of State and Government set up mechanisms within the African Union such as the Peace and Security Council, which seeks to manage political crises and intra-State conflicts. The objective of the African States is to equip themselves with the means to ensure their own security. It is clear that regional mechanisms cannot manage indefinitely without bilateral agreements, multilateral cooperation and other relevant alliances. In this respect, allow me to commend the active role taken by the United Nations in maintaining peace in Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and the Sudan.

We also note with satisfaction NATO's willingness to accept the unprecedented invitation of the African Union, made by the Chairman of the Commission, Alpha Oumar Konaré.

Allow me also to stress here the role played by Gabon in all of these peace processes, which have resulted in a gradual improvement in the security situation on the continent. The President of the Republic of Gabon, El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, has been fully involved, along with his African peers, in the resolution of African crises — consistently offering his good offices and mediation services whenever requested.

Given the current situation in the Sudan, with the tragic death of the Vice-President, John Garang, the international community as a whole must ensure that the ceasefire agreement signed in January 2005 holds — a necessary condition for the consolidation of peace and peacebuilding. I call on the parties concerned to respect their commitments in order that the peace process now under way may be concluded.

With respect to Central Africa, we welcome the relative calm seen in countries that were recently in crisis, particularly in the Central African Republic, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I should like here to welcome the conclusion of the electoral process in Burundi and to express thanks for the contribution made by the United Nations, the African Union and South Africa.

Gabon, which made its own modest contribution to the process, humbly encourages all of the new leaders to display political clear-sightedness and tolerance, with a view to the achievement of lasting peace. Their decision to create a Peacebuilding Commission will no doubt help to enhance the United Nations peacekeeping machinery.

As regards the economy, I need hardly recall that debt represents a major handicap for our countries. Indeed, nearly a third of our financial resources are devoted to debt servicing. Thus once again we would draw the attention of the international community to the specific situation involving the indebtedness of middle-income countries like Gabon.

Indeed, Gabon remains the only country in sub-Saharan Africa classified as a high-level middle-income country, thus making it ineligible for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, despite the political and economic reforms under way for more than a decade. The current surge in the price of oil — our State's main budget resource — further fuels the illusion of a monetary surplus and does not really help us in the area of development financing, since the oil bonus basically goes to service external debt.

It is true that at the Gleneagles, United Kingdom, summit last July, endorsing the London Declaration of 11 June 2005, the G-8 countries and other donors undertook important commitments. Gabon, for its part, would like to see those commitments translated into action, so as to increase the likelihood of achieving the Millennium Development Goa. , to which my country is particularly committed.

I also welcome the fact that the summit's final document recognized the urgent need to redouble efforts to achieve development objectives agreed at the international level, including the Millennium Development Goals.

In conclusion, I should like to express the hope that the work of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session will be crowned with success, so that together we can work to bring about a community of peoples and nations living in peace, security and stability. May God inspire our work.

The President: I commend speakers for their discipline in abiding by the time limit for speeches.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.